

YOUR
LETTERS

MAILBOX

Not even a plague of locusts can top the devastation and outrage visited on readers this month, forced to endure disappointing DVDs, wasteful packaging and a misleading take on the word 'free'

★ Playing safely



I have been reading the reviews of anti-virus and anti-spyware utilities your magazine has been doing over the past couple of issues. While having a decent anti-virus and anti-spyware utility installed on a PC is a mandatory requirement these days, it got me thinking. Even with these utilities installed, it is still possible for viruses and spyware to circumvent them (depending on the detection rates of the programs you have installed) and infect your PC.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a program that would allow you to easily segregate any activity that involves accessing the internet? A program that would totally remove any file or Registry accesses required as a result of your normal use of the internet? A sandbox, if you will.

Don't get me wrong. I am still advocating the use of anti-virus and anti-spyware programs, but used in conjunction with a sandbox. Wouldn't this be a much needed and very effective additional level of anti-malware protection? Especially if it were user-friendly.

Well, it does exist. It's called Sandboxie (www.sandboxie.com). It allows the 'sandboxing' of any program such as your internet browser, email reader or any installed program so that any file or Registry changes from using that program will stay in the sandbox and never get to your hard disk. Once you are finished, you destroy the sandbox, and the traces of what you were doing in the sandboxed session are instantly destroyed.

In addition, it allows you to sandbox the Windows installer service so that you can install and evaluate new programs in a sandbox and simply destroy the sandbox when finished without leaving a trace.

I would encourage you and all *Shopper* readers to evaluate it. It is a good addition to anyone's standard protection software and, to cap it all, it is free (registration optional). It would definitely be worth including on your next cover disc.

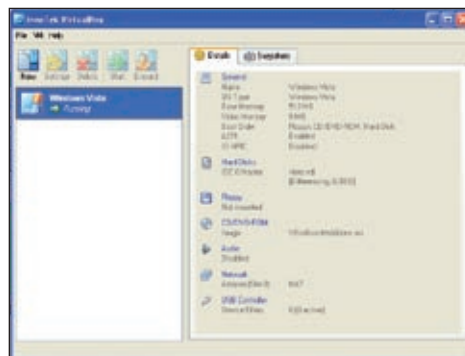
Colum Hickey

Most people want to achieve a comfortable balance between having a computer that is easy to use and keeping it secure from hackers, viruses and other threats. Using sandbox utilities is one way that enthusiasts can add another layer of protection, but it's not for everyone.

You could raise your game even higher, though, and use a fully featured virtual machine. If you intend to visit the types of sites that you know are going to contain lots of spyware, a program such as VMware (www.vmware.com) will allow you to browse bad sites safe in the knowledge that if there is any hacking to be done it will happen to a copy of Windows running in a window on your system. This can be restored to its initial state at the click of a button.

While VMware is good, there is an even better open-source alternative called VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org). In fact, we've found this product to be very powerful and it was, at one point, the only virtual machine that we could use to run Windows Vista on a Windows XP PC.

It so happens that some spyware and viruses cannot run (or are designed not to run) on virtual machines, so not only can you benefit from directing attacks to an easily restored system, but many attacks simply won't work anyway.



▲ VirtualBox is a virtual PC emulator like VMware, but it is easier to install and configure

CONTACT US

LETTERS PAGE

letters@computershopper.co.uk

TECHNICAL ADVICE

helpfile@computershopper.co.uk
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SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

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WRITE TO US AT

Computer Shopper,
30 Cleveland Street,
London W1T 4JD

GETTING LATE FOR WINDOWS 98?



I was very disappointed when I went to my DVD this month. I had paid more than I normally do because I wanted the Paragon backup software for my computer. I was also going to load the firewall from McAfee because Zone Alarm has stopped supporting Windows 98.

What did I find? Neither ran on Windows 98. I had checked in the magazine to find which operating systems were supported, but could find nothing. So I thought, let's see what else I can load. Nothing!

I understand that Windows 98 is getting old hat, but I feel I should be given some warning before I pay extra for the magazine with an enhanced DVD. I am

retired and not rich. I was going to tell you to stuff your magazine, but I like it too much. I really think the cover should warn potential customers that if we are not running Windows 2000 or XP then we shouldn't pay extra for a disc we cannot use.

Sholto Douglas

It's true that we don't publish lists of system requirements for software on our cover disc. The main reason for this is space; there's so much software on our disc, we couldn't cram it all on the page if we also listed which operating systems they worked with. As you have discovered, pretty much all the modern programs on the DVD need Windows XP.



We're sorry that you were disappointed. Unfortunately, we fear that as time wears on you will find it increasingly challenging to find new software that is compatible with your PC. Most new products are compatible with both Windows XP and Vista, and many software developers have followed Microsoft's lead and dropped support for Windows 98.

CRAZY LIKE A BOX

Last month, reader Terry Weston sent us a photo of an enormous box sent to him by Amazon. It contained a single SD memory card, the size of a stamp. We invited readers to send in photographic evidence of similarly wasteful packaging, and you didn't disappoint.



This is how a pack of DVDs arrived to me from a supplier by the name of Neat Ideas:



Ian Tasker



I received a giant box that contained two camera batteries. Both of these would go comfortably into a matchbox (included in the photograph for a sense of scale). Amazon was the perpetrator but, as it chose to split the batteries from a bigger freepost order, it met the cost:



John Jennings

ROOM WITH NO FREEVIEW



Your review in *What's New: Displays*, *Shopper* August 2007 criticises the Teco TL3212RM LCD TV for not having a digital tuner and states that you'd need a set-top box to get Freeview.

This is wrong, as far as the 27 per cent of your readers that can't get Freeview are concerned, that is. Why are TVs only reviewed by people who can get Freeview and who think that the UK coverage is 100 per cent?

J L Jones

In our review, we said: "There's no digital tuner, so you'll need to buy a separate set-top box if you want to watch Freeview channels. We'd really expect digital TV with a modern TV." Clearly, you need to be in an area that has Freeview coverage for this to make sense.

It's not entirely fair to say that we think everyone can receive Freeview, though. It's just that Freeview is very popular, provides lots of channels and is the future. In fact, it's the very near future. Even if you can't get it today, you will soon, so it makes sense to get a compatible TV. What's more, you'll actually require a digital TV soon (or at least a set-top box).

Over the coming years, the UK is switching completely from analogue to digital TV. This process starts next year, when the Border area (where over half of the residents can receive digital TV) switches over. This process will continue, with different areas switching over until 2012, when London, Meridian, Tyne Tees and Ulster go digital.

One of the reasons for the switchover is so that everyone can get digital TV. Turning off the old transmissions will allow better digital coverage. Because of this situation, it makes sense to buy a TV that won't become obsolete in a few years, when analogue transmissions cease.

You could also argue that it's pointless buying an HD TV unless you are a Sky or cable subscriber, where HD transmissions are available. Analogue and Freeview digital transmissions are all standard resolution. However, there have already been trials of HD TV over Freeview. You could miss out on free high-resolution TV programmes if you ignore this development too and buy a more basic TV.

BYE BYE SHOPPER?



Your magazine has been great over the years, and I have read and then subscribed to *Shopper* since the first issue, which was 88p. So it is with regret that I finally have to say goodbye.

In line with many businesses, I now find that Microsoft has finally put a nail in its coffin with the exorbitant cost of upgrading. I am therefore writing this using OpenOffice, and I am now in the process of moving over to open source.

To all my friends and staff at *Computer Shopper* – for no doubt the majority of your

readers will not follow my example and join the 'Open Revolution of free software' – can I say a big thank you and goodbye?

D R Avery

Sorry to hear that you don't think the magazine has anything more to offer you. Before you go, it's worth noting that there's a lot more to *Computer Shopper* than reviews of Windows-based software and Windows-oriented help. We review more hardware than any other magazine and we frequently publish features about subjects that are not specific to commercial Microsoft products.

In fact, your timing could not be worse. Next month, we are launching a new *Advanced Projects* article, which will include both Windows and Linux tasks, often explaining how to undertake them using open-source software.

So we hope that you'll return when you next decide you need a new PC, digital camera, smartphone, printer, hard disk upgrade or any other purchase, or if you want to learn more about using open-source software.

'FREE' AS A WORD



You omitted an important detail regarding AVG Anti-Spyware in your anti-spyware Labs report (*Shopper* August 2007). I believe that under the guise of Ewido (www.ewido.net), this software was indeed free in its fully functional form. However, the free version of AVG Anti-Spyware is only fully functional for the first 30 days. After this, the real-time scanner (resident shield) is disabled, as is the automatic update feature.

While this doesn't stop this product from being a useful tool in the fight against spyware, I think you need to provide your readers with the full picture. The full version costs \$40 (around £20) at the time of writing.

Will Read

Thanks for the update on that. When we reviewed the product, we believed that the software was a fully functional free version and not running on a time-limited trial. In fact, it costs £25 for a two-year licence. While this still looks like good value, there is far less to distinguish it from Microsoft Windows Live OneCare and Sunbelt Software CounterSpy V2,



WRITE IN AND WIN!

Everyone runs out of disk space sooner or later. One way to solve the problem is to send us a great letter. That's because Western Digital has kindly agreed to furnish our Star Letter writers with an award-winning 500GB My Book Pro Edition hard disk. This external drive connects using USB2 or FireWire. It supports both FireWire 400 and 800, and can transfer data twice as fast as some other external disks we've tested. Honoured with *Shopper's* Best Buy award in the January 2007 issue, this sleek-looking unit comes complete with Retrospect backup software and even has an LED indicator on the front to display how much free disk space remains.

STAR
PRIZE
WORTH
£150



PLUS!

Every published letter-writer who provides their address also receives a *Computer Shopper* mug



▲ SpyBouncer is little known and has a reported history of being a rogue spyware program

both of which cost around £13 per PC per year. In Live OneCare's case, this is because the package includes a licence for three PCs.

As we said in our review, the best product remains Steganos's AntiVirus 2007 security suite, which picked up all the threats, regardless of whether they were classified as spyware or viruses. Unfortunately, this now means we are unaware of any brilliant anti-spyware programs that have real-time protection and are also free.

SPYWARE CATCHER



Some years back, I stumbled on SpyBouncer while looking for something else on the internet. I signed up, paid my money and have been using it ever since as my anti-spyware program. I would dearly like to know how good or otherwise it is, but I have never seen a review of it in *Computer Shopper* or any other computer magazine.

I was hoping it would be included in your latest survey of anti-spyware, but once again was disappointed. Could you please put me out of my misery by checking it out in the not-too-distant future?

John H White

Our software reviews attempt to cover the types of products you are most likely to encounter, as well as those that are less well known but which work particularly well. We can't review everything on the internet, sadly.

We have never reviewed the anti-spyware utility you use, partly because it is little known and also because of its reported history as a rogue spyware program. The Spyware Warrior website (www.spywarewarrior.com) claims that SpyBouncer uses "false positives as a goad to purchase".

SCANNED AND DELIVER



I read your inkjet MFPs Labs in the August 2007 issue of *Computer Shopper* and have a couple of questions. In the article, you state that the "HP Photosmart 2575 has an Ethernet port so that it can be connected to a home or office network. This makes it easy for several PCs to print without swapping cables."

It's the swapping cables that I am concerned about. My home network has several PCs and the printer is permanently attached to one of them. That printer is shared on the network.

All the other PCs can see and use the printer. There is no need to swap any cables whatsoever, so why not mention printer sharing in your article?

While I'm used to sharing a printer and files on a network, I've not been able to share the scanner that I have. It is tied down to a single PC. Your article did not mention how the scanner part of the MFP is shared over the network. Could you explain in a future article how scanners or MFPs can be shared?

Gary Watson

You can share any printer using the method that you use, although there is a drawback to this. The PC to which the printer is connected must be turned on all the time for the other PCs to be able to print. This could cause problems if the PC crashes, someone wants to reboot it or upgrade it, or you simply want to turn off idle computers to save power. A printer with its own Ethernet port doesn't need a PC to share it, so it just sits on the network waiting for commands to print.

Sharing scanners is a far less simple prospect. We don't know of any consumer-level scanners that provide services to a network in the way that you are imagining. Some very expensive scanners are computers in their own right and can send scans as emails, but not the HP Photosmart 2575 that we reviewed.

Sharing a scanner is possible if you attach it to a PC on the network and use that computer to control the scanner as normal. Save the scanned images it produces into a shared folder, making them available to other PCs, and you've essentially created a shared scanner. You can't control the scanner remotely, but you'd have to

COMPUTER SHOPPER

SHOPPER OFFICE

Editor Paul Sanders
paul@computershopper.co.uk
 Deputy Editor David Ludlow
david@computershopper.co.uk
 Technical Editor Simon Edwards
simon@computershopper.co.uk
 Commissioning Editor Lynley Oram
lynley@computershopper.co.uk
 Admin Assistant Nicola Gibson
 020 7907 6270
 News Editor Paul Nesbitt
news@computershopper.co.uk

PRODUCTION

Managing Editor Steve Haines
 Production Editor Janey Goulding
 Art Editor Colin Mackleworth
 Designer Anand Parmar
 Group Art Editor Bill Bagnall

SHOPPER LABS

Labs Editor Tom Royal
tom@computershopper.co.uk
 Senior Staff Writer Chris Finnamore
chris@computershopper.co.uk
 Senior Staff Writer Seth Barton
seth@computershopper.co.uk
 Staff Writer Alan Lu
alan@computershopper.co.uk

ADVERTISING

Fax 020 7907 6600
 Email ads.shopper@dennis.co.uk
 Advertising Director
 Jonathan Kitchen 020 7907 6616
 Group Advertising Manager
 Richard Bennett 020 7907 6640
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 Karren Cook 020 7907 6642
 Senior Sales Executive
 Giulia Di Cesare 020 7907 6620
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 Adam Willbourn 020 7907 6621
 New Media Director
 Dan Newman 020 7907 6803
 New Media Account Manager
 Gary Rayneau 020 7907 6812
 List Rental Nerys Church 020 7907 6140

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

Fax 020 7907 6066
 Production Director Robin Ryan
 020 7907 6052
 Production Executive
 Lawrence Brookes 020 7907 6062

COVER CD/DVD CONTACTS

Luke Walker 020 7907 6330
 Graham Smith 020 7907 6335

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Tel 0845 126 0389
 Fax 0870 220 0290
 Email compshopper@servicehelpline.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

contributors@computershopper.co.uk
 Jennifer Bagley, Adam Banks, Colin Barrett,
 David Bayon, Mike Bedford, Mel Croucher,
 Kay Ewbank, Tom Gorham, Mike James,
 Rod Lawton, David McKinnon, Paul Mullen,
 Ben Pitt, David Robinson, Lauren Taylor,
 Jon Thompson, Alex Watson, Clive Webster,
 Karl Wright

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jamie McGovern, Alessandra Chila and
 Linda Duong

MARKETING

Marketing Manager Claire Childs
 Competitions Manager Emma Winfield
 020 7907 6260
 Marketing Production Controller
 Kerry Lambird

MANAGEMENT

Tel 020 7907 6000
 Publishing Director John Garewal
 Group Advertising Director
 Julian Lloyd-Evans
 Circulation Director Martin Belson
 Finance Director Brett Reynolds
 Group Finance Director Ian Leggett
 Chief Executive James Tye
 Chairman Felix Dennis

PRINTING

Printed by BGP, Bicester, Oxon
 Distributors Seymour 020 7396 8000

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The Editor is always pleased to receive ideas for articles, preferably sent first in outline form, with details of the author's background and, where available, samples of previously published work. We cannot, however, accept responsibility for unsolicited copy and it may take time for us to reply.

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visit it to put in the pages to be scanned anyway. When you return to your desk, you should be able to download the scans from the shared folder.

MIND YOUR OWN COSTS



I would like you to inform your readers that the accounts software company MYOB has changed its update policy for tax tables and upgrades. I have used its software for nine years, and in the past have been able to update our payroll with the annually changing tax rules for a cost of around £60 a year, which in itself is a lot for what it is.

Now it has changed so that to upgrade the tax tables you must buy a support plan and upgrade the software each year for £250. For software that costs £350 for the fully featured version, that is a big increase, and as a small business user I don't have a choice here.

I am very annoyed, and think people should be told and MYOB made to reconsider this move. It seems very aggressive.

Tom Bancroft

We asked MYOB about the change in its small business account pricing. Jiten Modhwadia, MYOB's head of customer relations, had this to say:

"Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the query regarding our tax table updates policy. Previously, MYOB has produced payroll tax updates for the current version and the immediate version prior to that of our MYOB Accounting and MYOB Accounting Plus products. This required customers who used the

integrated payroll feature to upgrade at least once every two years. This policy has remained since version 8 (launched in February 2000) even when our competitors changed over three years ago and required customers to be on the most current version to receive tax table updates.

"In order to sustain compatibility with software environment changes and government compliance requirements in an industry that has accelerated in its innovation, it has been increasing difficult, and not viable, for this to be maintained. Therefore, moving forward these updates will be available either within the latest version of the products, which are released in the first quarter of each year, or within our standalone payroll product.

"We believe this change provides a better service for our customers and ensures that the high standard our customers expect from MYOB is maintained with our product releases. To provide transparent clarity on costs: MYOB Accounting customers will pay an extra £50 over two years, MYOB Accounting Plus customers an extra £140 over two years, and MYOB Business Support plan customers (who get support and upgrades to the latest version) would now pay £149 per year (MYOB Accounting) or £249 per year (MYOB Accounting Plus), compared to £218 (MYOB Accounting) or £358 (MYOB Accounting Plus) under the old pricing structure.

"As all our MYOB customers know, we are committed to the highest levels of care and support and so we would urge anyone who has questions about this change to contact us directly on 020 8997 5500 or at info.uk@myob.com." 

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